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# SETTLERS IN AUSTRALIA:

A PRIZE POEM,

RECITED IN THE THEATRE, OXFORD,

JUNE 24, 1846.

BY

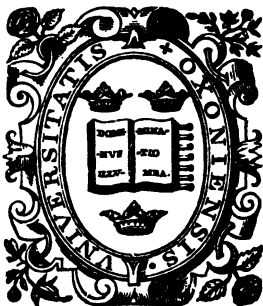
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## SYNOPSIS.

THE POEM opens by regarding the Sea as the great bond of union between the various parts of the world—Opposite feelings which it awakened in the minds of the first inhabitants of the Earth—Causes which have led to this change—applied to the present state of England, particularly of the Manufacturing Districts—Description of the departure of a body of Emigrants—Voyage—Arrival in Port Jackson—Varieties of Scenery—Peculiarities of the country arising from the absence of any associations attached to it—Sydney—Natives—Return to the Emigrants—Picture of Australian life—Compared with that of old Pastoral times—Contrast between it and the state of things which an increase of population is likely to produce in Australia—Analogy between the Past and Future—Retrospect of the rise and fall of Empires, which gives us ground to suspect that Australia will one day attain the position for which its natural importance seems to destine it—Conclusion.





## SETTLERS IN AUSTRALIA.

"Augescunt aliæ gentes, aliæ minuuntur,  
"Et quasi cursores vitæ lampada tradunt."

LUCRETIVS.

WHO that has wandered by the ocean shore,  
His full soul echoing to the wild waves' roar,  
Feels not their Spirit as a thrilling bond,  
Linking his fancy to the worlds beyond,  
Till his rapt thoughts, exulting, yearn to stray  
With the wan billows glimmering far away?  
Earth has her barriers, but thou, Mighty Sea,  
Bidst Man be One, divisionless, like thee.

Blank was their day who heard thy waves rejoice,<sup>a</sup>  
Nor hailed their echoes as a Brother's voice.  
They feared thee, Ocean, and thy giant mirth,  
And clung like children round their own green Earth.  
Silent they came—at misty eve they stood,  
Listening the hollow moaning of the flood,

<sup>a</sup> Compare the "*Oceanus dissociabilis*" of Horace and numerous similar epithets applied to the sea by the ancients.

Till its low ripple seemed to die away,  
Rising and falling on the viewless bay<sup>b</sup>  
Of a far land that haunted them, like gleams  
Of lingering glories from forgotten dreams.

There is a mystery in a Nation's doom,  
That whispers darkly in her hour of gloom;  
When to high Heaven a hungry people spread  
Their outstretched hands and call aloud for bread.  
It is a warning to go forth and reap  
The lingering promise of the unopened deep.

I saw a mighty people, and a shore  
Clustered with laden ships of costly store.  
And far along the deaf and stunning sound  
Of mighty cities rung and clashed around.  
But here and there, there stood a lonely band,  
With haggard looks, like aliens in the land;  
They turned and gazed upon the Ocean brine,—  
England! my country! heed them, they were thine.  
Yes, turn from fields, that green with summer corn  
Wave deep and shadowy in the lights of morn;  
Turn from the smiling cot—the heathy green,  
And all that gladdens England's village scene,

<sup>b</sup> Compare Tennyson, *Lotus Eaters*.—

“To him the gushing of the wave

“Far, far away, did seem to mourn and rave

“On alien shores.”

To where 'mid joys which he can never share,  
The pale mechanic plies his sickly care ;  
Doomed in some peopled wilderness to groan,  
Around him thousands, yet himself alone ;  
He hails the bark that beckons to pursue  
Yon shadowy pathway o'er the distant blue ;  
And hopes perchance beyond those waves to find  
Some happier home, some country less unkind.

The winds are wakening—down a broadening bay  
A vessel moves in stately pride away ;  
A crowd stands gazing, and the ship again  
Gives back the deep farewell of exiled men.  
One I remember, through his boyhood bred  
In his own hamlet folded in the shade  
Of two bleak mountains, o'er whose cloudy height  
His simple soul, ne'er winged a wayward flight.  
In careless pensiveness I saw him stand  
Counting the breakers on the lessening strand,  
And hard it seemed to leave the cherished ground  
To which his earliest, fondest hopes were bound—  
To lose whatever had been, and to be  
Cast on the waste of blank futurity.  
And now old thoughts came o'er him, old delights,  
And dreams that told of dear familiar sights.  
Last night at eve he watched the shadows fall  
From those dark woods behind his cottage wall ;  
That morn he turned again to linger there,  
Fearing the anguish of a father's prayer ;

Never to come again—to walk no more  
With those whose love he never knew before;  
Listening the hallowed Churchbells' mellow sound  
Call the meek shepherds from the hills around,—  
He turned, he spoke not—Oh! what tongue could tell  
The simple sorrow of that heart's farewell.

The bark is gone, and she is seen no more,  
And the round bay looks lonely as before.  
Yes; she is gone for many a night to keep  
Her silent vigils on the boundless deep;  
Where the tall Cape half veils his misty form,  
And seems to mingle with his own grey storm;<sup>c</sup>  
Through those green islands, where the men of old  
Sang of calm places and a land of gold;  
Until in airy distance dimly lost,  
Rise the dark headlands of Australia's coast.

Bright was the morn, the weary wanderer rose  
From dreams of home and memory's sweet repose;  
Sudden he gazed, and on the circling shore  
Cast his sad eye, and seemed to dream once more.  
Pillars of rock he saw, around whose bed<sup>d</sup>  
The eddying waves eternal circles led;

<sup>c</sup> Alluding to the peculiar appearances of the Cape in stormy weather.

<sup>d</sup> Alluding to the North and South Head near Port Jackson.  
"Two bare promontories of dark horizontal rock, between

Saw the clear sea-sand sparkle from afar,<sup>c</sup>  
Like diamond vales in fabled Candahar. .  
Before him slopes arose, with vistas green,  
Knots of deep shade and verdant banks between ;  
As over hill and isle and gleamy bay,  
Fell the full sunlight of the flooding day.

Onward he ranged, where Sydney's warder rock  
Lifts his proud portals to the billows' shock.  
Then all was changed—the dreary hills arose,<sup>f</sup>  
Where the red rock with deeper splendour glows.  
Wide arid wastes and crag-built ridges there,  
Gave back the sultry sun's unclouded glare ;

which stupendous pillars, as through a colossal gate, we sailed into Port Jackson."—Mrs. Meredith's *New South Wales*, page 34.

<sup>e</sup> "The pure white silvery sand which forms the beach in several of these picturesque coves, gives them a particularly bright appearance."—Mrs. Meredith's *New South Wales*, p. 35.

<sup>f</sup> "Our route still lay through the same wild monotonous scenery as the day before. Trees without foliage, hills and valleys alike destitute of verdure, chasms and ravines, without a thread of water in their arid, stony depths, made up such a world of desolation, that the contemplation of it became absolutely oppressive, and I gladly listened to glowing descriptions of the green and beautiful plains of Bathurst, which we were to reach on the following day."—Mrs. Meredith's *New South Wales*, page 73. Vid. also Pridden's *Australia*, pages 63, 64.

Dry rivers, scorched by some long summer's wrath,  
Yawned deep and dreary in his lonely path.  
And then the same sweet scene returned again,  
Bathurst's green downs and Illawara's plain,  
Where Yarrayne lingers 'mid his vale of flowers,<sup>g</sup>  
And Paramatta hides her vine-clad bowers.<sup>h</sup>  
What though for ages past they slumbered on,  
Sublime though silent, beautiful though lone ;  
Yet the blithe spring-time came, the sunshine rose,  
Night brought her dews, and eve her soft repose.  
While round each printless shore and desert clime,  
The Blue Pacific rung his never-wearying chime.

How lightly fell Time's secret footstep there  
That woke no echo in that silent air !  
Six thousand years—and yet no sound arose  
To break the stillness of thy long repose ;  
Mysterious land—and was it thine to hear  
Nought of the mighty world that thundered near ?<sup>i</sup>  
Those everlasting hills, those mountains brown,  
On whose dark heights the first-born Sun look'd down,

<sup>g</sup> Vid. Pridden's *Australia*, page 47.

<sup>h</sup> "Paramatta lies in a low situation, and is remarkable for its fruits."—Vid. Mrs. Meredith's *New South Wales*, page 59, &c.

<sup>i</sup> Cf. Motherwell's Poems :—

“ When every thing is sundering,

“ And every one is wondering,

“ And the huge globe goes thundering,

“ On, ever on.”

When the young Earth to life's wild turmoil sprung,  
And all the East with neighbouring battle rung,  
What were they then? No legend tales have they  
Of mighty men that lived and passed away;  
So wild, so vacant do they gaze around,  
Or Giants wakening in enchanted ground;  
Like dead men's shades, that walk the world alone,  
Striving to tell the things that must not be foreknown.

And who shall know them? but from Sydney's brow  
The spell is fled—the busy trader now  
Floats his broad pennon, and the tall ships throw  
Their quivering shadows on the bay below.  
The wanderer paused to hear the hallowed sound  
Of old familiar names re-echoing round;  
And with their sacred magic half believed  
Each spot the holiness of home received.

And who is he who from the settler's gate<sup>1</sup>  
Now timorous shrinks and now returns to wait;  
Whose narrow brow and vacant eye declare  
How faint the gleam of mind reflected there?  
Wild are his ways, unlike the ways of men,  
Child of the woods, Australia's denizen.  
The heart unquelled, the hand unstayed in strife,  
The stern sublimity of untamed life,

<sup>1</sup> Vid. Pridden, page 121, &c.



E'en these he knows not—by the lurid glare  
Of some lone fire he chants his muttered prayer,  
Or in the far woods, when the moon is low,  
With mystic dances waits the coming foe.

But ye, poor wanderers! who in doubtful mood  
Thridded the boskage of the wildering wood:  
Soon shall ye see your little store increase,  
Of cornfields glimmering through the forest trees.  
For you no more the jealous barrier line,  
No more the hedgerows trim your realms confine;  
But in some island valléy green and still<sup>\*</sup>  
Ye live unheeded, following Nature's will;  
Or rest at noon-tide by some purple lake,  
Whose drowsy ripple scarcely seems to break  
On its still shores, while drooping overhead  
In heavy air the lush Geraniums spread,  
And far away the wild bird slides along,  
Nor wakes the woodland with a passing song.

Oh, blessed change! to leave this weltering strife,  
To leave this pent-up agony of life.  
Beneath blue heavens your bleating flocks to fold,  
Like peaceful shepherds in the days of old;

<sup>\*</sup> Cf. Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur*,  
"The island valley of Avilion."

From Nature's self to gather endless love,  
And hold communion with the stars above.

A brief Farewell—and yet when some few years  
Have told their wondrous tale of hopes and fears,  
Another change shall come. Those prison towers—  
That fetter's clang that haunts your dreamy bowers,  
Whisper of stormy hours that yet must be,  
Marring that state of primal majesty.  
Ye have not long to rest—the nations ride  
Onward from isle to isle, from tide to tide.  
Onward they ride, with all their monster birth,  
Awakening up the slumbering void of Earth,  
Through all her quiet places, as the Sun  
Comes trampling out the starlights one by one.<sup>m</sup>

Great things lie round us—but we turn away,  
Rapt in the promise of our brief to-day.  
And seldom is the Giant Spirit free  
To cope unshackled with Futurity.  
Yet there are times when visions dim and dread,  
Like glimpses of the living to the dead,<sup>n</sup>

<sup>m</sup> The idea of this verse is borrowed from a line in French's Poem on the descent of the Rhone.

<sup>n</sup> In the same way that the events of life have been supposed to be made known to the souls of the dead (see Pind. Olymp. 14. 20. and Aristotle's Ethics, c. i.), we may suppose a mysterious connection to exist between the Present and Future.

Steal on our senses—are they idle things  
To which the wayward fancy fondly clings?  
Or doth experience, with reflected rays,  
People the hollow dark of unseen days,  
Like the great sky above, that deigns to keep  
Its broken image on the mirror deep?

Fond Man, look round thee—all behind is change;  
O'er heaps of desolation on we range;  
Earth is a shifting stage, where empires play,  
Each has his pageant—each his little day.  
And some are passed and gone, and some remain;  
What will they be? their sleep is not in vain.

And thou, Australia, though the latest born  
Of Earth's high children, be thou not forlorn.  
Yes! there are voices which rejoice o'er thee,  
As o'er a kingly infant's destiny.  
Wide sheltering crags, within whose circling base  
The nation's fleets have found a resting-place;  
A thousand flocks that range the level downs;  
And rivers gliding through majestic towns;  
All these shall yet be thine! arise, and be  
Great in thy truth as in thy mystery!





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